

Message Text

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R 141620Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9554

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMCONSUL ASMARA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 2242

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: IT, ET

SUBJECT: ITALY AND ETHIOPIA

SUMMARY. CONVERSATIONS AT FOREIGN MINISTRY REGISTER CONTINUING UNEASE AND DISCONTENT WITH ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT HANDLING OF EVACUATION OF ITALIAN RESIDENTS. END SUMMARY

1. FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS RECENTLY EXHIBITED TO EMBOFF CONCERN OVER STATUS AND FUTURE HANDLING BY ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT OF ITALIANS STILL RESIDENT IN ETHIOPIA, AND SOME UNHAPPINESS WITH ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT DELAYS IN CLEARING ITALIAN REFUGEES FOR DEPARTURE FROM ADDIS ABABA TO ITALY.

2. IMPLIED, RATHER THAN SPECIFICALLY STATED, WAS THE THOUGHT THAT THE ITALIANS FORMERLY RESIDENT IN ERITREA AND STILL REMAINING IN ADDIS ABABA COULD BE CONSIDERED AS HOSTAGES. MOST IMMEDIATE CONCERN IS THE EXAMINATION OF THEIR FINANCIAL STATUS WHICH THE DIRG IS APPARENTLY CARRYING OUT IN REMAINING HEADS OF FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS. THE GOI WOULD EXPECT THESE CITIZENS TO PAY THEIR JUST BILLS, TAXES, ETC., BEFORE DEPARTURE WHENEVER POSSIBLE, BUT HOPES THE DIRG WILL NOT BE TOO DEMANDING ON THESE

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WHO HAVE BEEN FORCES TO ABANDON SO MUCH IN ERITREA.

3. A SECONDARY CONSIDERATION, NO MORE THAN A CONTINGENCY THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IS TAKING INTO ACCOUNT, IS POSSIBLE DIRG POLITICAL PRESSURE ON THE GOI, SUCH AS AN IMPLICATION THAT THE CLEARANCE PROCESS MIGHT BE EASIER WERE CRITICISM OF DIRG POLICIES IN THE ITALIAN PRESS TO BE REDUCED OR ELIMINATED, OR WERE ANY PRO-ERITREAN DEMONSTRATIONS IN ITALY (NONE HAVE OCCURED) SEVERELY DEALT WITH, COMMENT: THE FOREIGN MINISTRY DOES NOT RPT NOT ASSUME THESE POSSIBILITIES WILL MATERIALIZE. IT IS, HOWEVER, INDICATIVE OF HOW AT LEAST THE WORKING LEVEL OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY EVALUATES THE DIRG.

4. THAT EVALUATION IS IN PART INFLUENCED BY THE INEP EHTIOP- IAN HANDLING OF THE REFUGEE AIRLIFT TO ROME WHICH WAS POST- PONED THREE TIMES. THE MINISTRY CONSIDERS THAT SENIOR LEVELS OF THE DIRG WERE LESS THAN FULLY COOPERATIVE AND BELIEVES THAT, ONCE THE DIRG HAD GIVEN THE GREEN LIGHT, THE CLEARANCE PROCESS WAS SLOWED BY LESSER FUNCTIONARIES "TOO SCARED TO SIGN ANYTHING" UNLESS ON WRITTEN ORDERS. OUR SOURCES BELIEVE THE PROBLEM TO HAVE BEEN MORE INEPTITUDE THAN POLITICALLY MOTIVATED, BUT FOUND THE DELAYS FRUSTRATING NONETHELESS.

5. APPARENTLY ABOUT 2,050 ITALIANS WERE EVACUATED FROM ERITREA TO ADDIS ABABA, WHENCE FOUR HUNDRED PLUS (MOSTLY WOMEN, CHILDREN, THE AILING) WERE AIRLIFTED TO ROME. SOME 2,000 ITALISN REMAIN IN ERITREA, FOUR TO FIVE HUNDRED IN ASMARA, LESS THAN 100 IN MASSAWA, AND ANOTHER THOUSAND SCATTERED IN OTHER PARTS OF THE PROVINCE. VOLPE

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